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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CAPTION)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2018
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KOROMA COMMITTED TO COUNTERNARCOTICS
FIGHT

REF: A. SIERRA LEONE 336
[1](#)B. SIERRA LEONE 365

Classified By: AMB JUNE CARTER PERRY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) At embassy request and following previous discussions with Presidential advisors Brian Gilpin and James Sampah Karona, Ambassador Perry, accompanied by the DCM, met with President Koroma 1 August to discuss the possible release of a DEA informant swept up in the arrests of narco-traffickers that followed the seizure of 730 kilos of cocaine (reftel A) July 13. Additionally, the Ambassador offered to provide technical assistance with the ongoing investigation, if the GoSL so desired, in part to determine if any of the traffickers currently detained by Sierra Leone could be prosecuted under U.S. law. The Ambassador also took the opportunity to explain our requirements to visit an AMCIT detained in the same case (ref. B).

[1](#)2. (S/NF) President Koroma said that the seizure was Sierra Leone's first experience with Narcotics trafficking, and he was determined that the process send a clear signal discouraging the drug business from using his country as either a destination or transit point. The Ambassador congratulated him on his government's quick reaction. Consequently, the President emphasized that he was closely monitoring the process to insure it remained credible, so that traffickers got the message to steer clear of Sierra Leone.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) The President expressed his intention to be helpful, and promised to discuss the release of the informant and possible technical assistance with his Attorney General and others, but noted that he was being closely watched and did not want to make any missteps. Any perceived subversion of the process would be misread as a lack of will to fight the traffickers. Since the informant had already appeared in court, his sudden disappearance would be noted and questioned by the press, his political opponents, and the traffickers themselves. He reiterated his desire to find a way forward, hopefully to include extraction of several arrestees who could be prosecuted under U.S. law. He said Mr. Gilpin would be in touch soon to set up a follow-on meeting to explore some possibilities.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) COMMENT: President Koroma is clear in his intent to keep traffickers out of Sierra Leone, and right to focus on the "process," a word he used several times, to make sure the traffickers are not quietly released through corruption or lapses in the judicial system. An otherwise unexplained release of the DEA informant would damage the credibility of his government and its counternarcotics efforts, the opposite signal the he (and the USG) want to send at this stage. The President was willing to explore options, however, but only those that would not undermine his Government's credibility. We agree with this position. END COMMENT.

